The POZ 100: O-R

November 18, 2019

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Our Lady J

West Hollywood, CA

Our Lady J

Our Lady J is an Emmy-nominated writer and producer best known for her work on Pose and Transparent. She holds the honor of being the first trans woman to be hired as a television writer as well as the first trans woman to perform at Carnegie Hall. She has won two Peabody Awards and has been nominated for three Writers Guild Awards and one NAACP Image Award. Our Lady J is living with HIV and has used her platform as a screenwriter to create authentic and sympathetic characters living with HIV as well as storylines that educate viewers about the virus and encourage the eradication of the stigma associated with it.

Johanna Padilla

Los Angeles, CA

Johanna Padilla

Johanna is an actor, advocate and designer pursuing her dreams in the fashion and entertainment industry. She’s also the linkage and retention coordinator at the Trans Wellness Center providing direct services to the trans community. She created The Wall Las Memorias Project’s (TWLMP) first-ever trans programing, which included a support and empowerment group for trans women and HIV prevention education at trans-inclusive events. Johanna helped created Midnight Stroll, a partnership with TWLMP and APAIT to provide services for the homeless trans population in Los Angeles. When not working, she tends to her YouTube channel, where she uses storytelling to combine her love of advocacy and beauty and to bring awareness of the issues that concern the trans and LGBTQ+ community.

Alex Palacios

Minneapolis, MN

Alex Palacios

As an early intervention navigator for The Aliveness Project, a community center for and driven by people living with HIV, Alex educates members of the community about HIV and encourages all individuals to seek out care. They believe that creating a comforting and identity-affirming environment is a cornerstone of LGBT medical care, and, to that end, they make a special effort to uplift minorities and be mindful of all sexual and gender identities. Alex sits on the Minnesota Council for HIV/AIDS Care and Prevention and serves as the membership director of the Stonewall Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party and secretary for the Aliveness Project's membership advisory committee. They are also a proud drag queen and an immigrant of Honduran (Garifuna) origin.

Channyn Lynne Parker

Chicago, IL

Channyn Lynne Parker

Channyn is the manager of strategic partnerships and external relations for Howard Brown Health, one of the nation’s largest LGBTQ organizations, which serves more than 35,000 adults and youth in Chicago. Channyn has been an HIV advocate for years and has devoted her life to fighting for social justice. Known as a loving “mother” in her community, she has worked at many drop-in centers throughout Chicago, helping homeless LGBT youth—living with and without HIV—obtain shelter and resources. She has also worked as a reentry specialist for incarcerated trans women and men and was the first transgender woman to work at the Cook County Department of Corrections. Friends say she’s an angel on your shoulder.

Alexis Powell

Baton Rouge, LA

Alexis Powell

A patient navigator at Baton Rouge’s Open Health Care Clinic, Alexis is widely known as the first transgender woman to be married in Louisiana and is the mother of an 8-year-old son. At the clinic, she goes to great lengths to advocate for all her clients so they can overcome barriers in order to receive needed services, stay in care and live a healthy and full life. She is a facilitator for Volunteers of America Greater Baton Rouge’s Transgender Focus Group, a member of the Transgender Law Center, a national board member of Transgender Advocates and a graduate of NMAC’s Building Leaders of Color Program.

Morey Riordan

Berkeley, CA

Morey Riordan

Morey is the founding director of the Transgender Strategy Center, a national trans-led effort that addresses gaps in leadership development, organizational support and pathways to possibilities. The goal is to achieve transgender health and equity. Morey previously served as executive director of Women Organized to Respond to Life-Threatening Disease (WORLD) and the Sperm Bank of California, where he was instrumental in helping it become the first fully licensed sperm bank in the United States to accept gay men as sperm donors. In addition, he spent almost seven years managing national grantmaking initiatives as vice president of access and innovation at AIDS United. As principal consultant of Riordan Strategies, he currently consults with funders and

community-based organizations. Last year, Morey received Project Inform's Martin Delaney Visionary Award for leading the fight for social justice with "remarkable integrity, kindness and passion."

Bré Anne Rivera

Albuquerque, NM

Bré Anne Rivera

Diagnosed with HIV in 2010, Bré has long been a formidable advocate for people living with HIV, particularly Black trans women. As cofounder and executive director of the Trans Sistas of Color Project in Detroit, Bré worked hard to ensure that Black trans women had the support and

resources necessary to stay safe and to thrive. She currently serves on the national advisory board of Positively Trans and the board of PWN-USA. Bré has helped PWN-USA center the leadership of trans women of color and provided an important lens on their work. In 2016, Bré participated in the Empowered: Trans Women & HIV video series, which gave trans women an outlet for sharing their own narratives about the virus. As a program fellow at the Groundswell Fund, she is working to ensure equitable funding for trans-led and trans-centered work in reproductive justice. She's also an actress and an impact producer for Femme Queen Chronicles, a web series about the lives of Black trans women living in Detroit.

Alexa Rodriguez

Baltimore, MD

Alexa Rodriguez

Originally from Usulután, El Salvador, Alexa was initially devastated after her HIV diagnosis in 1998. Once she came to terms with her HIV status, she began what would become a decades-long career in advocacy. As an openly trans woman and outspoken HIV activist in El Salvador, she was threatened with physical violence. In 2009, Alexa immigrated to the United States, where she was granted asylum in 2010, a green card in 2012 and citizenship in 2019. Now, she works as a trans care navigator at Whitman-Walker Health and is the director of the Trans-Latinx DMV, a chapter of the TransLatin@ Coalition. Alexa advocates with one goal in mind: to improve the quality of life of members of the trans, Latinx, Native American, immigrant and HIV communities.

Mj Rodriguez

Newark, NJ

Mj Rodriguez

Mj is an award-winning actress currently starring on Pose as Blanca, the mother of the House of Evangelista. Born in Newark, she wanted to become an actress at age 7. She made her off-Broadway debut as Angel in a 2011 production of Rent, for which she received the 2011 Clive Barnes Award. She has appeared on TV's Nurse Jackie and Luke Cage. Though she is not living with HIV, Mj has always made it a priority to advocate for those who are, and she strives to portray the character of Blanca with dignity and compassion.

Maria Louise Roman-Taylorson

Los Angeles, CA

Maria Louise Roman-TaylorsonJonathan TImmes

Maria has been a leader in social services for the Latina transgender community in Los Angeles for

over 20 years. She’s currently the vice president and chief operation officer of the TransLatin@ Coalition. She is a member of the Transgender Advisory Council for the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission and is a board member for FLUX, a division of AIDS Healthcare Foundation dedicated to creating safe spaces for trans and gender-nonconforming individuals. She was a presenter at USCA and the LLEGO National Latino Conference. She is also an actress and performer who has appeared in independent films and on numerous TV shows, including The Tyra Banks Show. Maria also appeared on the reality show Wild Things on Showtime.

Angelica Ross

Los Angeles, CA

Angelica Ross

“Black trans lives matter!” With that announcement, actress and activist Angelica Ross kicked off an LGBT presidential forum in September, becoming the first trans person to host one (the salvo referenced the 18 trans women who had been murdered this year in the states; 17 of them were of color). Angelica is the president of Miss Ross and the founder of TransTech Social Enterprises, a program that helps trans and gender-nonconforming people help themselves out of poverty through training in workplace skills. But you likely got to know Angelica through Pose, on which she played the HIV-positive (and aptly named) Candy Ferocity. We’re really hoping her newest character, Nurse Rita, survives the bloodbath of the current American Horror Story: 1984. Regardless, we know the real Angelica and her advocacy won’t be leaving the spotlight anytime soon.

Sabastian Roy

Bronx, NY

Sabastian Roy

As the owner and CEO of the New York Transgender Bodybuilding Federation, Sabastian has created a space not just for the transgender community but for everyone who wants to get healthy and remain HIV negative. A proud trans man on PrEP, he is engaged to Lailani Muniz, who's also on this year's POZ 100. As a serodiscordant couple, they remind others that HIV prevention works. A former security guard, he was named Mr. Black Trans King of New York in 2017.

Nadine Ruff

New Haven, CT

Nadine Ruff

As a transgender woman of color living with HIV since 1987, Nadine has endured and overcome a lot in her life, including substance use disorder, homelessness and incarceration. One day, she realized that she had to create a path for other trans individuals to follow, so she gave up drugs and began advocating for her community. Nadine went on to start the transgender support group known as Divinely You. Today, Nadine coordinates Aging Positively, a program for people age 50 and over who are living with HIV, at A Place to Nourish Your Health (formerly known as AIDS Project New Haven), one of the first AIDS service organizations in Connecticut. She recently received her master's degree in social work from Southern Connecticut State University.

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